

Christmas Savior

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Category: Buffy: The Vampire Slayer

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 1998-12-11 09:00:00

Updated: 1998-12-11 09:00:00

Packaged: 2016-04-27 09:48:49

Rating: K+

Chapters: 1

Words: 4,922

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Christmas gets dangerous when Xander comes to the conclusion that he must kill Buffy.

Christmas Savior

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Buffy looked up at the banner in the local mall that had Merry Christmas written on it. Tomorrow was Christmas Eve. She had been shopping all day with Xander and Willow and her feet were killing her, but she was determined to keep going.

"Buffy, please stop!" cried Willow for the hundredth time.

"Yeah Buff, give us a break," piped in Xander.

"Just one more store. It'll be the last one, I promise," whined Buffy.

"So you keep saying," replied Xander.

"Look, I'm sorry guys. I just want to find Angel the perfect gift."

"Buffy I doubt they have the gift you're looking for here," said Willow.

"Yeah, you'll never find the "perfect" gift in these cheesy department stores," said Xander.

"Hey, didn't you buy all our presents here Xander?" asked Willow.

"Um, no," replied Xander hiding his shopping bags behind him.

"You guys are right," said Buffy. "I'm not gonna find what I'm

looking for here, assuming that what I'm looking for is something that actually exists. Let's go home."

"Willow quick, before she changes her mind!" urged Xander as he pushed Buffy towards the exit.

"Aw Dru," whined Spike as he kicked a can off the ground in the abandoned warehouse he had come to call home. "I hate this time of year. Damn Christmas spirit just makes me sick. The whole bloody vampire population goes into a hibernation, I swear."

"Not this year," cooed Drucillea seductively.

"What? Does Daddy's little songbird have a pretty tune to sing him?"

"Very pretty."

"Yes, go on," encouraged Spike.

"The Savior is coming."

"So? Everyone knows that. That's what this whole damn holiday is about."

"No Spike, a Vampire Savior."

"A Vampire Savior! Are you sure?"

She nodded then got a far away look in her eyes. "I got a dolly once on Christmas. But, the head fell off," she said as she bowed her head in sadness.

Spike tilted her chin up so his eyes met hers. "That's all in the past, love. You've given us all the reason in the world to be happy this Christmas. The only head that will fall off this year is the Slayer's." They both smiled at the thought.

Willow popped two aspirins into her mouth. They had been at Buffy's house for 3 hours now. Xander and Buffy had been fighting all night long and her head had decided to protest. She looked into the mirror and wondered how long she could stay in the bathroom before Buffy and Xander would notice.

"Xander that's the nineteenth ribbon you've screwed up since we started this!" said Buffy.

"Sorry, but some of us find better use of our time than perfecting the fine art of ribbon tying," retorted Xander.

"Fine, your packages can look like something a preschooler wrapped."

"So the Slayer thinks she's better than me again, big surprise."

"Look, I'm tired of this! Let's just finish wrapping these presents," said Buffy. She felt ill on top of all the fighting that Xander and her had been doing all night and just wanted to go to bed. She reached for one of her gifts when Xander grabbed her arm and lifted her off the ground.

"I'm tired of taking orders Buffy," said Xander in a voice she hardly recognized.

"What are you doing Xander?" screamed Willow as she returned from the bathroom.

He looked at his hand and dropped Buffy. Willow rushed to her aid. He looked at Willow then back at Buffy and ran out the door.

Xander sat on his bed with his knees curled up to his chest. Why had he done that to Buffy? Why did it feel so good? And why did he feel the need to do something worse to her next time? Just then he heard the window open and jolted his head in that direction. "Who's there?" he asked.

"You're humble servant, Spike, my Savior."

"You! What are you doing here?"

"Well, my Savior, I've come to help you."

"What do you mean?"

"C'mon, you must have started to feel it by now."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Sure. It's all in your imagination. You'll wake up tomorrow and that damn nagging in your head will be all gone." He laughed. "Oh I'm sorry. I did try to say it with a straight face, but you know you won't get any peace until the Slayer or yourself is six feet under in a coffin."

"You're lying!"

"My Savior, why would I lie when the truth is so much more fun?"

"Stop calling me that!"

"You'll slay the Slayer. Sure, you might be able to prevent it for a day or two like all the others before you, but by Christmas she'll be dead and you'll have fulfilled your destiny as the Vampire Savior."

"No..."

"You don't believe me? Then ask your Watcher friend. Of course he'll have to kill you, but at least you'll know the truth."

"Get out!"

"As you wish my Savior," said Spike with a deep bow. He went to the window. "I'll see you at the Slayer's funeral." Then he was gone.

Xander heard a knock on his door and nearly had a stroke. He quickly got up to answer it. Cordellia stood outside with some wrapped packages in her arms. Xander stared at her in disbelief. "Well are you going to invite me in or will I just have to freeze to death?" she asked.

"Actually Cordellia this wouldn't be..." he started saying as Cordellia forced her way in. "Like I was saying just make yourself comfortable."

She dropped her presents on Xander's couch and sat down on it. She picked up one of the packages and handed it to him. "Here."

"Why are you giving this to me?"

"Look it's Christmas, don't make me look for a reason not to give it to you, alright. Just open it."

He ripped off the wrapping paper and found a cardboard box underneath it. He opened the lid and found a framed picture inside. It was taken in the library at school. Cordellia, Giles and Willow were on the lower level and Xander was on the higher level with his arm draped around Buffy's shoulders. They were all smiling. Xander held back his tears.

"I stole the negatives from the yearbook staff. I was going to rip them up because it proves that I actually use the library, but I thought this might be better."

"I don't know what to say," said Xander with some difficulty.

"Don't say anything then. Just get that frown off your face." She walked over to look at the picture herself, "I didn't think you'd hate it so much."

"It's not the gift Cordellia. Listen, you got to get out of here. I'm not safe to be around right now."

"What?"

"Leave, please. You get involved too often as it is."

"You mean this has to do with demons and vampires again? Don't those creeps ever take a night off? It's almost Christmas for God's sake!"

"Apparently not, so now you gotta go or you'll be in the middle of one of our usual messes."

"Who do you think I am? Some little girl who can't take care of herself? I want to help."

"Why?"

"Well, it's Christmas and...maybe I care if you get slaughtered."

"Really?"

"I said maybe okay, that's the best you're going to get out of me. So who is this slimeball we're fighting."

"Me."

"You?"

"That's why you got to leave. You got to get the others to meet you at the library. Tell Giles that Spike said I was the Vampire Savior."

"What about you?"

"I'm going to Angel's apartment. Maybe he can help me."

"Help you what?"

"Fight this urge to go rip Buffy in half."

Cordellia's eyes got wide at this remark. She decided to leave her packages on the couch and pick them up later. She walked to the door and stopped in the doorway. "Don't get yourself killed okay."

"I'll try not to."

She nodded and walked out the house.

Angel heard a knock at his door, which was an unusual thing in itself and more than enough to put him on guard. He opened it and found Xander standing there. "Xander, what are you doing here?"

"I wish it was just to say hi, but we both know that would be a big fat lie, so I'll just tell you. Spike paid me a visit tonight."

"He did? Are you alright?"

"No."

"What's wrong then?"

"He told me that I was the one that would kill Buffy. He told me that she'd be dead by Christmas all thanks to me."

"What makes him think you'd do that? You're her best friend."

"I'm the Vampire Savior."

"You? No offense Xander, but Buffy would kick your ass."

"Buffy was a little worn down last time I saw her. Care to guess why? I have."

Angel frowned, "This isn't good."

"No kidding."

"Have you told Giles?"

"Yeah, I've rallied the troops, but you have to help me Angel."

"How?"

"Don't let me out of your sight. I'm losing it here and I'm not going to be able to stop myself for much longer."

Angel nodded and let Xander into the apartment. Xander sat down on the sofa. He then took a gold, heart shaped locket out of his pocket and stared at it. "What's that?" asked Angel.

"It was my grandmother's locket. It's been in the family for generations. I kind of use it as a good luck charm."

Angel didn't believe in luck, but if Spike was telling the truth it couldn't hurt.

"So Xander told you he was the Vampire Savior?" recapped Willow.

"That's what Pointy told him," replied Cordellia.

"You mean Spike," corrected Giles.

"Pointy, Spikey, what difference does it make? The point is Xander's in trouble."

"If only that was the worst of it," replied Giles.

"What do you know about the Vampire Savior, Giles?" asked Willow.

"Enough. It's a well documented phenomena in the Watcher Diaries."

"Do share with the rest of the class," prodded Buffy.

"Well, as you know a new Slayer comes with the death of the last one. For every fourth Slayer in the cycle comes the Savior. The Savior is the one person in the world capable of destroying the Slayer according to legend. Generally it's a close friend of the Slayer who, after a few days time, comes into the notion that they must kill the Slayer in order to relieve their own madness."

"This was all in the handbook wasn't it?" asked Buffy.

"That would explain why Slayer's aren't suppose to have friends I suppose," replied Willow.

"What do you mean, madness Giles? Why would Xander go mad?" asked Buffy.

"Well, a Slayer focuses her energy in certain manner."

"I do?" interrupted Buffy puzzled.

"Yes. It's a totally unconscious act, but you are constantly focusing psychic energy to give you the powers you possess. A Savior serves as a sort of beckon that absorbs a great deal of Slayer energy. This interrupts the normal flow of energy, causing the Slayer to feel sickly. The energy the Savior absorbs brings, him in this case, on the same level as the Slayer strength wise. But a Savior is just a normal human, so eventually the extra energy he absorbs will become too much for him and he'll try to get rid of it by killing off the source of the energy."

"Me," muttered Buffy.

"That will be Xander's prime goal. He won't be sure why exactly, but to destroy Buffy will relieve him of his unseen pain and he won't rest until he's done so."

"So now what do we do?" asked Buffy.

"Well as your Watcher I would have to advise you to...uh...eliminate the Savior," stated Giles.

"What do mean? You can't just kill him!" said Cordellia.

"Giles, you can't expect us to just finish off my best friend!" continued Willow quite agitated.

"I realize that," said Giles bluntly. "As a Watcher I say eliminate him, but as Xander's friend I say there must be another option. No Watcher has put much time into researching the Savior legend for several hundreds of years, so I suggest we start there."

"But I thought you said it was a well documented phenomena," said Willow.

"Cases of the Vampire Savior has been documented frequently enough, but research into the prophecy regarding the Savior hasn't been done for quite some time. Perhaps we can find some way to stop Xander besides the method that most Slayers have resorted to in the past."

"And that would be?" asked Buffy.

"A steak through the heart," replied Giles.

Buffy's face turned pale at the thought. "No," she said sternly. "Let's hit the books."

"And I was so hoping not to have to do any studying during the Christmas break," pouted Cordellia.

Angel watched silently as Xander tried to hold onto his self-control on the sofa. Xander had been shaking uncontrollably all day long. Sweat gleamed from his face as he moaned in pain. It had been a long time since Angel had seen such pain or caused such pain to someone

else and in spite of his occasional dislike for Xander, he did consider him a friend and didn't enjoy seeing him like this.

"Angel," said Xander with great difficulty.

"Yes Xander."

"Is this what it feels like...to be you? To want to give her a hug...and rip her heart out at the same time?"

"In some ways. But wanting to and doing it are two different things. I might feel like that sometimes, but when I'm near her," Angel paused, "that demon inside me just doesn't have a chance."

"Angel, what time is it?"

"It's almost sundown. You made it through most of Christmas Eve."

"Maybe you should call them. See if...if they found anything."

"Alright. Just try to rest, okay?" said Angel as he walked towards his phone. Xander smiled wickedly from the sofa.

"Why Xander?" asked Willow disgusted at their lack of progress. They'd spent their whole Christmas Eve in the library and hadn't found anything they didn't already know. "He doesn't exactly get along with demons. He doesn't even like Angel very much."

"Well it started many generations ago," explained Giles. "A town in Western Europe was promised to be spared from the wrath of the vampires if one of the people from that village agreed to kill the Slayer. The town elected an unwilling young man to be the first Vampire Savior and he killed the Slayer. The vampires were far from satisfied with that, however. They laid a spell that would have his family kill every Slayer from that point on, but the spell wasn't as potent as the vampires had hoped and the Savior was confined to appear with only every fourth Slayer. I imagine Xander is of that bloodline and being such would be drawn to the Hellmouth."

"Thanks for the info Giles, but it was a rhetorical question. I've already read most of what you just said," said Willow.

"Oh sorry," replied Giles sheepishly.

"Destroy the Savior's Heart, destroy the Savior's Heart. They all say the same thing," whined Cordellia as she started to fool around with the pendant around her neck.

"Maybe the old Watcher's were right. Maybe it is the only way to stop a Savior," said Giles glumly.

"No!" exclaimed Buffy. "There's got to be another way!"

Willow folded her arms on the table and put her head on top of them in despair. She stared towards Cordellia and watched her play with

her pendant. Xander had been her best friend for as long as she could remember. She always knew that any one of them could become a vampire at anytime, and that she thought she could handle. If she ever had to stake the thing that killed Xander and stole his body she would, but this was different. Xander wasn't a vampire. She continued to watch Cordellia play with her pendant and a memory came to her. "I remember when we were little and used to play house," said Willow to Buffy. "Xander had this heart shaped locket that he'd let me wear around my neck. It was worth a lot of money I guess, so I always felt special."

"Really? How much?" asked Cordellia suddenly interested in the conversation.

"I'm not sure exactly. But it was important enough so that they gave it a name."

"Like the Crown Jewels or the Clockmin Diamond? That's cool," said Buffy.

"They called it...hey, wait a minute."

"What Willow?" asked Buffy.

"They called it the Savior's Heart."

"What?" asked Giles.

"Xander's grandmother gave it to him before she died. It's been in the family for generations! Xander keeps it in his room most of the time."

"Of course! Those books aren't talking about Xander's heart at all. They're talking about that locket. If what Willow says is accurate, destroying the locket should break the curse." said Giles.

"Great, let's go get it," said Buffy.

"No," replied Giles sternly.

"What?"

"Willow and I can handle this. I want you and Cordellia to stay here and continue with the research in case this is all just a wild goose chase."

"Oh alright, but I'm doing this under protest," complained Buffy as Giles and Willow raced out the door.

The phone started to ring soon after. Buffy picked it up and heard Angel greet her on the other end. "Angel, great news! We figured out how to break the curse."

"Really?"

"Yeah, Xander has this locket his grandmother gave him a long time ago at home and it's cursed. Giles and Willow just went to Xander's house to break it."

"A locket? It didn't happen to be heart shaped did it?"

"Yeah. How did you know that?"

"Buffy it's here. Xander brought it with...ahhh."

"Angel? Angel!"

"Buffy, what's going on?" asked Cordellia.

"Hello Buffy," replied Xander.

"Xander? What happened to Angel?"

"Nothing too serious...yet."

"Xander, listen to me! Your locket is cursed! You've got to destroy it."

"Listen to you! Blaming your doings on my grandmother's locket! Don't you demons have any respect?"

"Demon? Xander, I'm your friend. Listen to me, you've..."

"No! You listen to me for once! If you want to see your boyfriend somewhere besides an urn, you'd better meet me in the old warehouse next to the Bronze at midnight. And Buffy, come alone. If I see you with company Angel might not be here for you to save." She heard a click, then a dial tone.

"Buffy?" said Cordellia.

"Xander's got Angel. He wants me to meet him at the old warehouse near the Bronze at midnight or he'll stake him." She glanced at her watch. "That gives me 20 minutes to get there."

"I'll drive you."

"No! Xander told me to come alone or else. You tell Giles and Willow what's going on." She raced towards the door.

"Buffy!" shouted Cordellia as Buffy stopped and turned around. "What if you have to slay him?" Buffy stared at Cordellia for a minute then turned around and left.

Buffy walked to the entrance of the warehouse. It was an old brick building that badly needed repairs. The windows were cracked and broken and graffiti decorated the outside walls. Buffy pushed the large steel doors open with a loud creak and a lot of effort. She knew that Xander was nearby because she could feel herself get consistently weaker and sicker as she approached the warehouse, but she couldn't stop now. She quickly surveyed the area, but found nothing. She walked to the middle of the room when she heard the doors slam shut behind her. Xander stood there smiling.

"Where's Angel?" demanded Buffy as she walked towards him.

"Oh he's at home tied up. He'll probably feel like he had too much to drink last night when he wakes up though."

"What kind of game are you trying to play here Xander?"

"I'm playing Slayer and you're the demon."

"I don't want to fight you."

"I'm sure you don't. I mean, where would you be without your little slave?"

"What?"

"Don't play dumb with me Buffy. I know you're a demon. You've just been using us to defeat your enemies. You've brainwashed us all into believing that it's our job to help you because you're "saving" mankind, but you're just as bad as they are!"

"How can you say that?"

"I've been fighting your spell since yesterday. The torment was unbearable, but I managed to break it. Now I got to help Willow and the others. If I kill you the spell will be broken for them too. I won't have them go through the same thing as me!" said Xander as he pulled out a knife.

"Xander put that down, please!"

"No! I've listened to your lies for far too long. Goodbye Buffy." He swiped at her head with the knife. She ducked and kicked him in the stomach. He went sprawling backwards into the door. Buffy ran. Xander followed, but failed to notice a small locket had fallen out of his pocket onto the ground. Buffy raced up a pile of wooden crates. She looked around and saw Xander climbing up after her. She pushed the crate nearest to her down towards Xander, but he quickly got out of the way and resumed his climb. Buffy was dizzy from the effort she had exerted in pushing the crate and lost her footing. She fell down the pile of crates on the opposite side that Xander was climbing up. She wanted to stop. She was nauseous, tired and her body ached from her fall, but she realized Xander was coming, pulled herself to her feet and hobbled away. Xander followed. She came to a dead end and turned around. She pulled a stake out of her jacket.

"Nowhere to go demon."

"Back off Xander, please," pleaded Buffy raising her stake.

Xander responded by rushing at her and slicing her arm. Buffy dropped the stake and grabbed her arm in pain. She dodged the next swipe and tried to kick him back, but couldn't quite reach him. He punched her and she staggered backward, falling. He brought the blade of his knife near her throat. "Merry Christmas Buffy."

At that same moment Willow, Cordellia, Angel and Giles pushed open the doors of the warehouse. Angel stepped in first. He was angry with himself for letting Xander get the jump on him, but at least Xander wasn't very good at tying knots and he had managed to escape and meet up with the others. "Buffy!" he shouted.

"Buffy can't talk right now Angel, and in a minute she'll never talk again!" shouted back Xander.

They all started to run in the direction of the voice, but Willow stopped as she heard something crack beneath her feet. At that same moment Xander started screaming and fell onto his back unconscious. Willow looked down and found the Savior's Heart beneath her foot, shattered to pieces.

Everyone had decided to stop at the park on their way back home for a quick break. Xander and Buffy were doing better now, but they were still weak and the drive was not agreeing with their stomachs. Buffy was sitting on a bench looking at the brightly-lit Christmas tree in the middle of the park when Xander sat down next to her. "Hey Buff. I just wanted to make sure you were all right," said Xander. "You know that wasn't me saying that stuff."

"Yeah I know, but maybe you were right in some ways. Maybe I have convinced you all that slaying is your responsibility too. I mean, just because I can't have a life doesn't mean you shouldn't. Maybe I am just using you. You went through hell because of me."

"Buffy, don't say that. You know the vamps are the ones to blame. We help you because we care about you. And we're not just fighting to help you. This is the world we're fighting for here and it should be everyone's responsibility. If you look at it that way you deserve way better help than us."

"But Xander, you can't go up from the best."

He smiled. "Look, I want to talk with Cordellia for a minute. I'll see ya when we get moving again. And by the way, Merry Christmas."

"Merry Christmas Xander," said Buffy as she gave him a big hug.

He tapped her playfully on the nose and walked away. Angel walked over and sat down next to her after Xander was out of sight. "He really cares about you," he said. "He wouldn't have gone through all that pain if he didn't, he would have just given in."

"I know. Xander and I just had that chat."

"Then what's bothering you now?"

"Nothing's bothering me."

"Come on Buffy, be straight with me."

"Oh it's silly."

"What?"

"Well, I never got around to getting you a gift. I was looking for the perfect gift, but I blew it."

"No you didn't."

"How so?"

"You're sitting here next to me. I can't think of anything more perfect."

"I can," said Buffy as she leaned over and kissed him.

Meanwhile Xander and Cordellia were having a conversation of their own.

"I wanted to thank you for helping me out Cordellia," said Xander. "I know it kind of put a damper on your Christmas plans."

"You're right it did, but I did it to get my gift from you more than anything else," said Cordellia.

"I can't believe you! We've never bought presents for each other before, so of course I didn't get you one before you showed up at my door. And do you think I've had time to get you a Christmas present after everything that's happened to me since then?"

"Well I did give you a gift. If you ask me, the least you could do is give me one."

"No, the least I can do is not give you anything. What did you think I was going to give you anyway?"

"Oh, just this," said Cordellia as she wrapped her arms around Xander and gave him a passionate kiss. He was surprised, but quickly followed her lead and embraced her back.

When they broke the kiss Cordellia said, "that'll do for this year, but think designer clothes next year Xander."

"I think it's time we moved on," shouted Giles to the little party in the park. They all gathered around and starting walking back towards the cars.

"Giles, what are you doing for the Holidays?" asked Willow.

"Well I was planning on curling up with a good book at home and relaxing for the day."

"All alone?" asked Xander.

"Yes, I suppose. It's not as if it were the first time. Why?" replied Giles.

"Well we were going to ask you before this Savior thing happened if we could come to your house to exchange gifts around supper time," explained Buffy. "Would you mind?"

"Don't you see enough of me as it is?"

"C'mon Giles, you know better than that," said Buffy. "You mean a lot to us."

"Yeah, what's Christmas without our favorite Watcher?" piped in Xander.

He looked at them all and smiled. "Oh very well. I'll have to whip up some kind of meal for all of you, I suppose."

"Giles, you cook?" inquired Buffy.

"Don't sound so surprised. One learns a variety of useful skills as a Watcher. I've been holding off on that particular lesson so far, but I promise you we'll go over it sometime," said Giles with a laugh.

"I wouldn't worry about it Giles. If she stays with Angel she won't have to cook much of anything for him anyway," said Xander dryly.

Giles looked up into the sky as the argument provoked by Xander's last comment began and successfully drowned most of it out. He watched a bright star shimmering in the darkness, much brighter than the others and muttered a quick "Thank you." He then turned his attention back to the others as they all walked towards their vehicles.

THE END

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